

## Lady Warwick's Astonishing Attack On "Frivolous" War Nurses. +



Mlle. Greuze, "the Daintiest Beauty in Paris," Only One of the Horde of Society Women and Actresses Who Have Rushed Into the Nursing Profession to Torment or Cheer Up the Wounded Soldiers.

By Frances Evelyn, Countess of Warwick.

**A** BUSES cling to a crisis as barnacles to a ship, and every aspect of war has its own peculiar abuses. While millions do their duty with quiet heroism, there is always a minority that takes advantage, that corrupts others—or itself. Some believe that fraud and foolishness stay at home, that they cannot approach the field of arms, but this is far from being the case.

My thoughts turn back to the South African war, when certain scandals were supposed to have reached their zenith; I look around me to-day, listen to the well-authenticated stories brought to me by relatives and friends, and know that South Africa did not tire the possibilities of folly and excess. For once I am not pleading for my own sex. I plead for one part of it against the other, for a majority against a minority, for those who are doing what they are paid to do, against those who are voluntary workers.

The position comes a little strangely to me when I look at it in this light, but the highly-trained, conscientious, painstaking hospital nurse whose patient heroism proclaims her a true follower of Florence Nightingale is being exposed to scandalous annoyance for no good purpose and to no useful end, and I feel that I must plead her cause, since she is in the last degree unlikely to plead it for herself.

Society women of a certain class made themselves so notorious in the military hospitals and elsewhere during the South African war that at least one General threatened to send them home and another refused to allow any more to come out. As soon as the greatest struggle of our history started, in August last, certain women of means and position proceeded as silently and unostentatiously as was possible under the circumstances to equip hospitals and to set about their self-appointed work.

They labored conscientiously and sought no more publicity than was necessary to enable them to collect money from philanthropists and friends. They did their best; some were already qualified by previous experience, others acquired their knowledge under the most trying conditions possible. They have worked since war began, well content to "scorn delights and live laborious days;" some who are near and dear to me have said that they have well-nigh forgotten the old life and the comforts they deemed indispensable only a little while ago.

I think it may be claimed for them that they have played a good part, and that in helping others they have not sought to draw attention to themselves or minimize the credit due to the trained sisterhood

### "The Butterfly Sisterhood Who Seek Sensation and Gossip and Sit on the Bed Smoking Cigarettes"

**T**HE Countess of Warwick, who is universally regarded as the foremost woman leader of England, has written a remarkable article for this newspaper criticising the horde of society and theatrical women who have taken up war nursing for the sake of notoriety or in frivolous spirit.

The Countess does not give names, but many people in England know to whom she refers. Some of the "war nurses" at whom she is aiming are so highly placed and influential that it would be difficult for the authorities to remove them. Probably the Countess expects that by her severe criticism she will shame them into retiring or reforming.

Nevertheless, much of the war nursing done by prominent women appears to be giving satisfaction. While it is of course outrageous that a woman should be frivolous in the presence of suffering, it is a positive benefit to the wounded soldier if an attentive nurse is handsome and attractively dressed.

The handsome Duchess of Westminster, who was rather frivolous before the war, is conducting a pretty hospital for wounded soldiers at Le Touquet, near Paris. Strange to say, her sister, the Princess of Pless, who is married to one of the richest noblemen of Germany, is conducting an equally successful hospital for German soldiers near Berlin.

The picturesque dancer, Ida Rubinstein, adored by Gabrielle d'Annunzio, has established a hospital in Paris. There she gratifies her dramatic instinct by wearing her nurse's uniform most effectively, while she cheers up the wounded soldiers by her graceful poses.

of love and pity that cheers the wounded and comforts the dying, as "The Lady With the Lamp" taught them to do in the far-off days of the great Crimean struggle. They have made many friends and no enemies; the hero of the trenches and the assaulting party has not given more to his country, for both have given their all; the man his strength, the woman her practical sympathy, and both a high degree of physical and moral courage.

Unfortunately there is in London to-day a very large company of young women to whom war is little more than a new sensation. They are not old enough to understand or young enough to be restrained. In normal times they must be "in the movement," however foolish that movement may be, and a war that staggers the Old World and the New leaves them very much where they were before. Under the rose they have not diminished their amusements; dances and dinner parties have been the order of the Winter season.

They have been trumpeted by the section of the press that delights in recording vain things, but those who view the currents of London's social life know that I am writing the simple truth. There is nothing to be said; let those laugh who may and can at such a season; their laughter proclaims them what they are.

Unfortunately the people I have in mind have not been content to devote themselves to brainless frivolity, because they must sample every sensation that the seasons provide—they have invaded the sanctuary of the hospital nurse. Scores have found their way to the great London hospitals in town to face what they are pleased to regard as training. I have known some who have danced till 3 a. m. and have presented themselves at the hospital at 8 o'clock!

Everybody knows that the training of a real hospital nurse is a very serious matter; that it makes full demand upon physical and mental capacity, and that a long period is required to bring the seed of efficiency to flower or fruit. The social butterflies have made no such sacrifice. They have acquired a trifling and superficial knowledge of a nurse's work and have then set their social influence to work in order to reach some one of the bare hospitals where they may sample fresh experience.

If they were really useful there it would



be unkind to offer a protest, but the general opinion is that they do more harm than good. They subvert discipline, they are a law to themselves, they are too highly placed or protected to be called to order promptly, they have neither the inclination nor the capacity for sustained usefulness. To sit at the end of a bed and smoke cigarettes with a wounded officer does not develop the efficiency of a hospital.

One hears repeatedly that this girl or that has gone to the front and one imagines devotion, self-sacrifice, self-restraint and a dozen kindred virtues. Unfortunately it is chiefly in the realm of imagination that these virtues exist. For the rest, the interlopers want limelight, and plenty of it; their pictures flood the illustrated papers, and to read what is written of them the experienced person might imagine that they are bearing the heat and burden of the day, the solitude and anxiety of the night, while in very truth they do no more than search for fresh sensations in an area that should be sacred.

The type of mind that can seek refuge from self and boredom in such surroundings cannot be stricken into serious ease; tragedy cannot reach it. To do a very minimum of work, to attach themselves to the most "attractive" cases, to carry small talk, gable and gossip into places where so many come to die, these are the main efforts of the young society nurses, and all these outrages are being carried on from day to day.

The real nurses and sisters are, I am told, bitterly indignant. They ask no more than to be left alone to do their best, but they know how hard it is to make an effective protest and they have little or no time to do so. They recognize by reason of their training the full motive of their excursion into the region of suffering, the



On the Left is the Picturesque Russian Dancer, Ida Rubinstein, and on the Right You See Her in the Hospital for Wounded Soldiers Which She is Conducting in Paris.



The Princess of Pless, Sister of the Duchess of Westminster, with the German Wounded She is Nursing Near Berlin.



The Once Rather Frivolous Duchess of Westminster, Who is Conducting a Soldiers' Hospital Near Paris.

men, women and children in every phase of helplessness and hopelessness? I do not think so. There is neither notoriety nor limelight in the sober, serious life of the hospital nurse and sister; above all, there is a hard and necessary discipline that calls for much moral courage to render it tolerable. Physical courage is seldom lacking either in men or women who are well-bred, and it may be freely granted that a certain measure is demanded of the butterfly nurses, but there is no redemption in this. To savor the full sense of life without courage is impossible; one might as readily make an omelette without breaking eggs. In this case it is courage misdirected, energy mispent.

I feel very strongly about this scandal, so strongly that I have not hesitated to write what is bound to offend some of my own friends, but there are times when it is impossible to be silent if one would live on tolerable terms with oneself. I feel that in these days woman is called upon to make supreme sacrifices; that what she is giving ever now is less than will be required of her later on; that her war record and her record when peace is about

to return will be scanned closely and critically by generations of really free women yet unborn.

To know of a blot upon woman's wartime service record, and to make no attempt to erase it, is impossible. The record of the real nursing sisterhood is brilliant in the extreme. Why should it be obscured for the sake of a few highly-placed and foolish young women who seek with the minimum labor to make the maximum of effect? It is unjust, ungenerous and altogether unworthy of the representatives of families that in many cases have earned their ample honors legitimately enough.

Great Britain owes more than it can ever repay to the nursing sisterhood, and it is intolerable that while their silent heroism passes with so little recognition, any girl of good family who assumes a uniform she has not won the right to wear should pose as the representative of a sisterhood she is not worthy to associate with, of whose tradition she is ignorant, of whose high discipline and complete restraint she is intolerant.

There are three classes of women in our midst. The first earns reward and claims it, the second earns reward and does not claim it, the last claims reward and does not earn it. Of these classes the real nurse belongs to the second and the butterfly sisterhood to the third. At such a season as this there is no room in our midst for the last and it would be well for us all if authority could spare a moment from manifold activities firmly and ruthlessly to suppress it. The hardship involved would be of the slightest, the benefit serious and